

Courier

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Gang Prevention Summit sets course of action

On Friday, Feb. 25, community groups, elected officials and county government employees converged at the Fairfax County Government Center to discuss gang prevention, intervention and suppression. The summit focused on coordinating existing gang prevention and intervention efforts among county government, schools



Chairman Gerald E. Connolly

and community groups.

Sponsored by the Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention, talks were structured around a recommended gang prevention model. This model, created by the U.S. Department of Justice, offers a structure for coordinating prevention and intervention programs by government and community groups. While other jurisdictions across

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HR Central improves service to county employees

When something good gets better, we all benefit. And county employees will be enjoying even better customer service at the Department of Human Resource's new *HR Central*. This new concept brings together all HR resources in a single location designed to provide faster and better service to county employees. On Feb. 23, County Executive **Tony Griffin**, HR Director **Peter Schroth** and others cut a ribbon

marking the official opening of this new customer service unit.

The entrance to *HR Central* is now at Suite 270, toward the south end of the Government Center. *HR Central* is a customer service unit that will offer 'one-stop shopping' of HR services. A county employee will be able to get information or questions answered on benefits programs, payroll status, employee relations,

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Gang Summit, from page 1

the country use this model, Fairfax County is one of the first in this region to employ it.

"Our community is one of the safest. Our crime rate is the lowest of the 50 largest jurisdictions in the country," states Board of Supervisors Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly**.

"At the same time, we have one of the lowest ratios of

"The leading risk factor for joining gangs is unsupervised time with friends."

police officers per capita. These facts reflect the outstanding work of our men and women in the Police Department and Sheriff's Office. It shows that the investments we are making — in schools, recreation, human services — are working. Gangs threaten the well-being of our children and our community. We must prevent our children from getting involved in a destructive, dangerous lifestyle. We can and must protect our children. Our community is already on the path to halting the further spread of gang activity, and today's summit allows us to continue the journey together," he said.

Chairman Connolly, Fairfax County Police Chief **David Rohrer** and Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent **Jack Dale**, Ph.D., addressed participants. These officials highlighted the county's and public schools'

prevention and intervention efforts and the current gang situation.

"Fairfax County is one of the safest communities in the nation. The presence of gangs in our region is the one cloud on the horizon," said Connolly, who considers the issue one of his top priorities.

"Gang prevention is a law enforcement issue, but it is not just a law enforcement issue.

We need coordinated, commu-

nity-based prevention and intervention efforts — and that's the purpose of this summit. We're bringing together residents, community organizations and government agencies — many of whom have programs already in place — to talk to each other, coordinate resources and attack this problem

from all directions."

The model presented at the summit is based upon social science research into why youth join gangs. Created by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the model is established on the idea that no single program can end gang violence.

Therefore, it addresses prevention, intervention and suppression.

Five interrelated components are outlined in the model: mobilizing the community, providing opportunities, social intervention, gang suppression, and organizational change and development.

"Gangs are a problem for almost every one of our communities," Superintendent Dale said. "The leading risk factor for joining gangs is unsupervised time with friends."

At the summit, participants also discussed how the model could be used cost effectively to create new programs or expand existing ones. Programs such as public awareness initiatives, community involvement, law enforcement endeavors and after-school programs were discussed.

The Fairfax County Coordinating Council on Gang Prevention was established by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The council is responsible for the coordination and oversight of the county's gang prevention and intervention efforts, and the group reports directly to the Board. The council was founded on the premise that gang prevention requires a community-based approach. The summit included the appointment of **Robert Bermingham Jr.**, MPA, as the new gang prevention coordinator. Bermingham will coordinate the development and implementation of interdepartmental plans, strategies, policies and communication related to the county's gang prevention efforts.

For more information about the council, please contact **Robert Bermingham** at 703-324-8786, TTY 711. For more information about the summit, please visit the Web site at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/gangprevention/summit.



Fairfax County Police Chief David Rohrer addresses the Gang Summit.

HR Central, from page 1

training opportunities and employment services with one stop. The *HR Central* team will represent a common, central knowledge point for HR functions. And, trained representatives from financial and benefit program vendors also will be located in the area.

The concept for *HR Central* grew out of the department's strategic planning efforts through feedback from employee focus groups and information gathering sessions. As a result of the strategic planning process which involved most of the department, the department is more clearly focused on finding ways to enhance efficiency and provide better services for customer expectations. "I'm very proud of the changes the entire HR team has instituted and supported to help create a higher performing organization. And, you can rest assured; we will continue to strengthen our focus in other customer areas as well," said Schroth.

By embracing technology, DHR has accomplished other recent successes also. Included in that category is the highly successful AIMS (Application Information Management System) that has completely revolutionized the way county employees and residents locate and apply for county jobs; the first ever transition to the Benelogic online benefits enrollment program this fall with more than 70 percent of county employees participating; and the new pay advice online program which is providing employees with pay information faster than the previous printed forms while saving the county money for mailing. "The idea of bringing all our services together in one customer service location and surrounding it with self-service or online technology applications is a real coup," said Schroth.

To ensure the high customer focus envisioned for *HR Central*, the department hired a new customer service manager, **Ed Barker**. Barker has had a long association with the Fairfax County Public Schools system, most recently establishing and managing the school employee service center.

Barker said the *HR Central* concept is to provide answers to customer's questions. "By having knowledgeable persons to answer call

center telephones and staff the front desk to help clients, we expect to provide better service and save employees time in resolving HR issues," Barker said. He pointed out that

A ribbon-cutting heralded the grand opening of HR Central.



the goal is to answer 75 percent of the questions at the front desk before having to connect the customer to a DHR specialist.

Evelyn

Grieve, manager of Human Resources Information Technology, was in charge of the implementation of the 'one-stop shopping' concept for *HR Central*. "We started with the conceptual designs and worked collaboratively with FMD to come up with the final design," Grieve said, noting that "work couldn't have been done so well without the full participation of the HR staff, FMD and DIT."

So what is the main message Barker would like readers to understand? "I want our customers to know that they will get outstanding service and their questions answered when they come in or call HR Central. We four at the front desk are trained and ready to provide answers," he said.

Stop by *HR Central* in Suite 270 and meet the people who can help you. You also can call 703-324-3311, TTY 711, and get assistance. ■



Ed Barker, Agnetta Palapios, Mary Hughes and Jan Kendell are ready to help you at HR Central.

"The idea of bringing all our services together in one customer-service location and surrounding it with self-service or online technology applications is a real coup."

- Peter Schroth, HR director

FY 2006 Budget – Linking Vision to Resources

On Monday, Feb. 28, County Executive **Tony Griffin** presented his proposed FY 2006 budget to the Board of Supervisors and residents of Fairfax County, saying, “I am extremely proud of the progress we have made over the past few years in terms of defining strategic priorities for Fairfax County and taking steps to tie our invest-

ment of resources to meet those priorities. What began as an initiative to transform county government into a high performance organization has paid dividends in terms of articulating our values and operationalizing them through vision elements that support the Board of Supervisors’ priorities.”

Spending initiatives are linked to the Board of Supervisors’ priorities established at their February 2004 strategic planning retreat, as well as the county core purpose and seven vision elements (see adjacent boxes). These linkages were made throughout the FY 2006 budget, which can be accessed online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb.

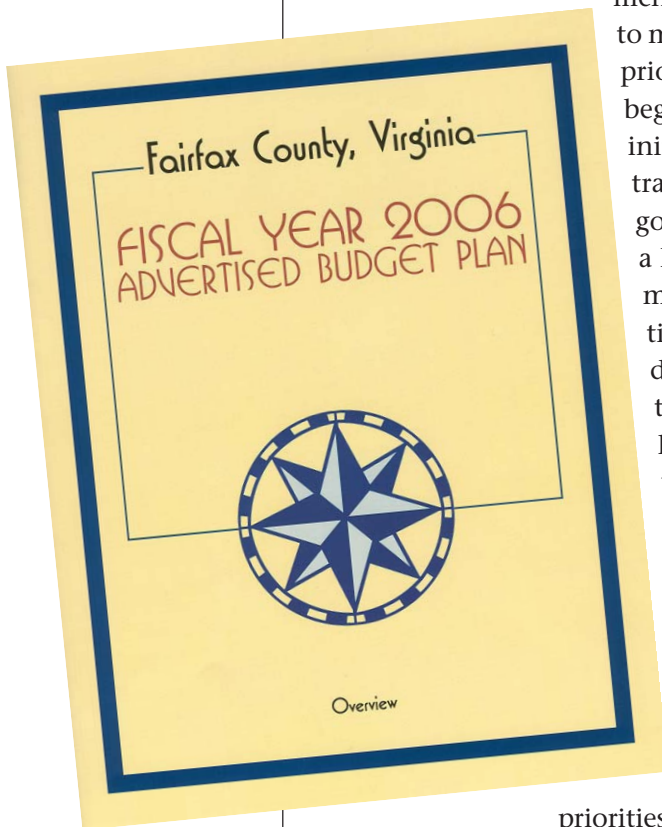
The total FY 2006 proposed budget for all funds is \$5.06 billion. General Fund disbursements, which include the transfers to the School Operating and Debt Service funds, total \$3 billion, an increase of 6.93 percent over the *FY 2005 Revised Budget Plan*. The

county executive proposed to increase the county’s operating transfer to Fairfax County Public Schools by 8.24 percent to \$1,431.34 billion, an increase of \$108.96 million over the FY 2005 level. The combined transfer for School Operating and Debt service is \$1.56 billion, which represents 52.0 percent of total County General Fund disbursements.

The biggest story of the FY 2006 budget, however, is the continuing trend in increasing residential real estate assessments. For the fifth consecutive year, average residential real estate assessments have increased by double digits. Jurisdictions in the metropolitan Washington area, as well as others nationwide are experiencing similar increases. The FY 2006 real estate estimate is based on a 23.49 percent increase in the FY 2006 valuation of real property, reflecting a 20.8 percent increase in equalization (the reassessment of existing structures) and a 2.69 percent increase due to new construction. Not surprisingly, residential equalization contributes the largest component. Increased demand and a supply that cannot keep pace are driving up home prices. Low mortgage rates also continue to fuel sales. These trends remained strong over the past year and as a result, the county’s residential equalization increased 23.09 percent in 2006. All categories of residential property experienced double-digit increases in value for FY 2006. Since FY 2000, average house values have more than doubled, growing 127 percent from \$195,713 to \$444,766 in FY 2006.

Based on the significant impact that this has on residential taxpayers, the county executive and the Board of Supervisors have established cutting the real estate tax rate as a top priority. Consequently, the county executive’s advertised budget includes a tax rate cut of ten cents – from \$1.13 per \$100 assessed value to \$1.03 per \$100 assessed value. With this cut, the total real estate tax

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reduction since FY 2002 is 20 cents or approximately \$1,531 in annual savings for the typical residential taxpayer.

In his presentation, the county executive noted that his proposed budget, "...represents our collective commitment to preserve the high quality of life and exceptional services that residents have come to expect, while recognizing the essential challenge of weighing these services against taxpayers' ability to pay for them." General Fund direct expenditures are limited to an increase of 2.44 percent over the *FY 2005 Revised Budget Plan*. This allows for compensation adjustments and requirements associated with new facilities planned to come online in FY 2006. These facilities include the Crosspointe Fire Station, the Little River Glen Adult Day Health Care Center, the Southgate Community Center, and public health nurses and clinic room aides for the new South County Secondary School. A total of 166 new positions are recommended for FY 2006. Of these, 127 are associated with new facilities and/or public safety, while 39 are workload related.

The majority of the General Fund increase is associated with salary adjustments and higher fringe benefit costs, including health insurance premiums for both the county and employees, which are projected to increase an average of 15 percent for Health Maintenance Organizations and 12 percent for the county self-insurance plan. The primary factors driving these increases are increased utilization and the rising cost of prescription drugs.

Two years ago, the county introduced a Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) for public safety employees in order to retain trained and experienced employees for a maximum of three years past their regular retirement date by providing the ability for an employee to retire for purposes of the pension plan, while continuing to work and receive a salary for a period of up to three years. During the DROP period, the pension plan accumulates the accrued monthly benefit in an account balance identified as belonging to the member. The account balance is credited interest in the amount of

five percent per year, compounded monthly. A DROP participant's account balance will be credited with the monthly benefit calculated using service and final compensation as of the DROP entry date with increases equal to the annual COLA adjustment provided for retirees. For FY 2006, DROP will be extended to those in the Employees' Retirement System as well.

Public safety employees (not under Pay for Performance) will be eligible for regular step increases (depending on their current step) at a total cost of \$2.5 million and their pay will be adjusted 3.07 percent for the market rate adjustment in July 2005 at a total cost of \$10.5 million in FY 2006. Uniformed employees in the Police and Fire & Rescue departments will also receive a 4.00 percent across-the-board increase at a cost of \$11.2 million based on a comparison with other metropolitan Washington area departments.

Funding of \$9.8 million is recommended for the sixth year of the Pay for Performance (PFP) program which includes approximately 8,000 nonpublic safety employees. The pay scales for nonpublic safety employees will also be increased to reflect the 3.07 percent market rate adjustment. The market rate index is calculated based on data from the Consumer Price Index; the Employment Cost Index, which includes private sector, state and local government salaries; and the Federal Wage adjustment. This is designed to keep county pay scales from falling below the marketplace, requiring a large-scale catch-up every few years. Nonpublic safety employees do not receive this adjustment through a cost-of-living

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Board of Supervisors' Priorities

- ♦ Strong investment in education
- ♦ Public safety and gang prevention
- ♦ Affordable housing
 - ♦ Environmental protection
 - ♦ Transportation improvements
- ♦ Revenue diversification to reduce the burden on homeowners

County Core Purpose

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County by:

- ♦ Maintaining safe and caring communities
- ♦ Building livable spaces
 - ♦ Practicing environmental stewardship
- ♦ Connecting people and places
- ♦ Creating a culture of engagement
- ♦ Maintaining healthy economies
- ♦ Exercising corporate stewardship

Local photographer joins relief efforts

Local photographer **Art Cole**, DFS/OFC, is participating in a photography project to raise funds to help those devastated by the Dec. 26 tsunami. He donated images he has taken in Virginia. *Lulu.com*, a print-on-demand publisher, and Color Centric Corporation, teamed with Digital Photography Internationale, a guild of online digital photographers from four countries, to create a 110-page full-color photographic publication called, *Images to Brighten Our World*. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to benefit tsunami relief charities.

The collection of over 130 photographs by 13 artists is presented in an 8.5x11 format and will retail for \$34.95. Twenty-five dollars of each sale will be given directly to relief organizations. The book is being marketed through *Lulu.com* and Amazon Marketplace, and can also be obtained through your local bookstore by providing them with the ISBN number (1-4116-2363-0).

For more information, contact Art Cole, 703-618-1155, TTY 711.

And congratulations, Art! ■

LoS Ceremony on March 11

The Length of Service Recognition Ceremony will be held on March 11 at 8:30 a.m. in the Board Auditorium of the Government Center. The ceremony will recognize those employees who reached career milestones of 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of service in 2004. Board Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly**, Supervisor **Penny Gross**, and County Executive **Tony Griffin** will deliver the recognition packages and congratulate employees on their dedicated service to the county. This year will be the largest group of employees ever to be recognized at the ceremony, totaling nearly 600.

Call the RSVP phone line at 703-324-3376, TTY 711, to advise whether you will be attending and get instructions for receiving your award. Check the ceremony program, available as you enter the Board Auditorium, for the order of departments and employees so you will be ready when your name is announced.

Don't forget the brunch immediately after the ceremony in the cafeteria. ■

Recycling yields sweet results

This past January, many Fairfax County employees joined Clean Your Files Week, an annual campaign sponsored nationally by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The purpose is to encourage America's office workers to increase the amount of paper recycled in the workplace. Here are some grim statistics

provided by the American Forest and Paper Association (AFPA): ♦ U.S. office workers generate over 12 million tons of waste paper each year; ♦ the average American uses 580 pounds of paper yearly; ♦ as a nation, we consume 850

million trees annually. However, all is not lost! The AFPA reported that U.S. paper recycling reached an all-time high in 2004. Certainly, Fairfax County employees accounted for some of that increase. The Clean Your Files Week contest pitted departments and agencies against each other to see who could recycle the most tonnage. Planning and Zoning and Compensation and Workforce Planning took top honors among entries submitted. Congratulations to our winners and all who participated in this great contest. The prize was certificates for free ice-cream cones courtesy of Ben and Jerry's.

Contact **Marion Plummer**, DPWES Solid Waste Collection & Recycling Division, 703-324-5154, TTY 711, to find out more information on the county's recycling programs. ■

Pohick Regional Library even had a Recycling Tree to help collect recyclables.



Briefs

Recycle Your Aluminum Cans at Work

Your used aluminum cans are collected at many larger county sites for the Aluminum Cans for Burned Children (ACBC) program. If not emptied by custodians, the contents of ACBC boxes can also be emptied at special "cages" located outside the parking area of the Pennino, Herrity and Massey Buildings. These cages are emptied by the Fire Department, which runs the ACBC program. To order ACBC boxes for your agency, please call 703-246-3801, TTY 711. You can also drop your cans off at many Fairfax County fire stations. For more information on materials you can recycle at work, please contact **Marion Plummer** at 703-324-5451, TTY 711.

Save Gas

Each day 320,000 Washington area telecommuters save two million vehicle miles as well as 100,000 gallons of gas. Have you signed up for telecommuting? Fairfax County has about 800 teleworkers now with a goal of reaching 1,000 in 2005. Check out more information about teleworking on the Infoweb at <http://Infoweb/telework>.

Envision Your Success – First Annual Career Expo Tomorrow

Fairfax County's SkillSource Centers, the Center for Business Planning and Development, the Northern Virginia Workforce Investment Board and employers throughout the region have joined forces to present a job seekers workshop tomorrow, Sat. March 5 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., for the first annual Career Entrepreneurship Expo. Information about employment and training opportunities, and about small business

Briefs

development is free for job seekers, career changers and those interested in starting their own businesses. It will be held in the Board Auditorium and Conference area of the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway. No pre-registration is required. For more information, contact **Ximena Rada**, Department of Family Services, 703-533-5748; TTY 703-533-5316.

JDRDC Needs Volunteer Language Interpreters

The Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court is seeking volunteer language interpreters to assist court staff and clients. Primary duties will include facilitating communication between clients and court staff, translating court documents, interpreting at some court hearings and helping clients review their court orders. Fluency is required in English and Spanish.

For more information about the interpreter program or to request an application, please contact **Maria Agosto**, Volunteer Coordinator, at 703-246-2856, TTY 703-273-3713.

Briefs

Employee Emergency Alerts

With two snowstorms behind us and the rest of March before us, county employees are reminded to sign up for the county's Emergency Alert Network (EAN). You can register for either normal business hour emergency weather alerts or 24/7 emergency weather alerts. And weather alerts, notifications and updates can be sent to any or all of your technology devices: E-mail account (work, home, other); Cell phone (text message costs may apply); pager and PDA.

Employees should log on to the EAN and update your account. New county employees are encouraged to register. The Infoweb address for the EAN is <http://ean.fairfaxcounty.gov/>. You will find answers to the most common support questions on our frequently asked questions page.

Correction

The price of the Northern VA Soil and Water Conservation District Shrub and Seedling Sale packets was incorrectly reported in the Feb 18 Courier. The price is \$16.95 per packet.

One of Ten

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board's New Generations program is one of only 10 programs in Virginia to receive the "Living the Vision" recognition by the VA Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. New Generations is a long-term residential substance abuse treatment program for mothers and children.

(Photo identification: Stephanie Bigelow, substance abuse counselor for New Generations; James Reinhard, M.D., commissioner, VA Department of Mental Health/Retardation/Substance Abuse Services; Kathy Butler, director of New Generations; Peggy Cook, director, Alcohol and Drug Services; The Honorable Jane H. Woods, VA Secretary of Health and Human Resources. Photo provided by event coordinators.)



Budget, from page 5

increase. Pay increases continued to be earned through performance. By adjusting the pay scales, however, employees' long-term earning potential remains competitive with the market.

Other budget adjustments affecting county employees include \$2.4

million to increase shift differential and revise the holiday pay structure, which especially affects those who provide essential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The shift differential rates are proposed to increase from \$0.65 to \$0.85 per hour for the evening shift, and from \$0.90 to \$1.10 per hour for the midnight shift. The adjustment to holiday pay changes county policy from a standard payment for eight hours of holiday pay regardless of the shift worked to granting hour for hour holiday pay/compensatory time to all employees who are required to work a schedule of more than eight hours per day and who are required to work on the county-observed holiday. In the case of Fire and Rescue employees on a 24-hour shift, the number of holiday pay hours would increase to 16, which is the typical way other jurisdictions have addressed the holiday pay issue for 24-hour shifts.

An increase of 8.89 percent in General Fund revenue affords the

opportunity to undertake a number of initiatives put on hold for a number of years when revenue growth was flat or consisted entirely of real estate tax increases. Among these is the recom-

The Board of Supervisors have established cutting the real estate tax rate as a top priority.

mendation to use the equivalent of the value of one penny on the real estate tax rate, \$17.9 million, to begin a dedicated funding source for critical stormwater management projects. The cost of these projects is estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars and will address public safety concerns associated with flooding, preserve home values and protect the environment.

Another essential need is affordable housing. With home prices accelerating, moderate and lower-income families and individuals are rapidly being priced out of the housing market

in Fairfax County. Since 1997, the county has lost 1,300 affordable units that were converted into luxury condominiums or market-rate apartments. The Board of Supervisors

recently accepted a report from the Affordable Housing Preservation Action Committee that called for the dedication of one penny of the real estate

tax rate to help keep 1,000 units of housing at affordable rental rates. In his budget message, the county executive noted that while the work of the committee concluded too late to be included in his advertised budget for FY 2006, he supported using such a dedicated funding source as a meaningful investment toward stemming the ongoing loss of affordable housing in the county.

The calendar below shows the timetable for presentation, review and discussion of the FY 2006 Advertised Budget Plan. Employees may review the Feb. 28 presentation on Channel 16. ■

Budget Calendar

- ♦ Feb. 28 - County Executive Tony Griffin presented the proposed FY 2006 budget to the Board of Supervisors. View on Channel 16, March 4 and 6 at 9 p.m.
- ♦ April 4,5,6 - Public hearings will be held in the Board Auditorium at 7 p.m. Those wishing to speak may contact the Office of the Clerk at 703-324-3151. Hearings will be televised live on Channel 16.
- ♦ April 18 - Board of Supervisors marks up the budget, 10 a.m.
- ♦ April 25 - Board formally adopts the budget. ■

March 9 Millennium Forum has been cancelled.

The program, featuring George Mitchell, former U.S. Senator and current Disney Corporation board chairman, will be rescheduled.

SNOW closing? 1-877-667-3391

<http://infoweb/courier>



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